

*Winifred Welles has been elected acting editor for the summer months*

# THE MEASURE

## A JOURNAL OF POETRY



**The Maid of Naaman's Wife, by John Drinkwater**

**Poems by Seven American Poets    -    -    -    -**

**Reviews of Edward Thomas and Padraic Colum's**

**-    -    -    -    -    Anthology of Irish Verse**

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## Contents

POEMS	Page
The Maid of Naaman's Wife. By John Drinkwater.....	3
Is This the Lark! By Joseph Auslander.....	8
Abandoned. By Joseph Auslander.....	9
I Know It Will Be Quiet When You Come. By Joseph Auslander...	9
The Mordant. By E. S. Wentworth.....	10
Anger. By Winifred Welles.....	11
Suicide. By Winifred Welles.....	11
Noon in a Wood. By Maxwell Anderson.....	12
Portrait. By Faith Baldwin.....	12
Spring in the Zoo. By Witter Bynner.....	13
Appleblossoms Near the Desert. By Glenn Ward Dresbach.....	13
Sonnets to Sleep. By Amy S. Jennings.....	14
IN REVIEW	
The Poetry of Edward Thomas. By Padraic Colum.....	15
Irish History in Little. By Maxwell Anderson.....	17

# The Measure

## *A Journal of Poetry*

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Number 15

May, 1922

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### The Maid of Naaman's Wife

THAT was the proud woman, Naaman's wife,  
    Basking at noon under the Syrian fans,  
While Naaman, the leprous mighty captain,  
Proud glowing flesh now silver-skinned and tainted,  
Walked in contagion here and there, apart.  
His wife, the unblemished Naaman in her mind,  
The man who, coming with the spoils and shouts,  
Had made a hundred triumphs hers, when all  
The Syrian women courted her for that,  
Now saw in the pestilent limbs shame and reproach,  
Some treachery that made her, who was mate  
Of Syria's pride, bondwoman of a leper.  
She must nurse her blame, since he was Naaman still,  
With an old honor paid by steadfastness,  
The mark of Syria's compassion. Black  
Thoughts were her only payment for betrayal,  
But in secret she could play them without pity,—  
Let the fans beat, they could not beguile her from that.

And Naaman had loved her, but not now,  
Knowing the uses that his love had been,  
How given for her to squander it in pride.

Syria out of Israel had brought  
Captives, and among them one, a maid,  
A little maid, just troubled with the touch  
Of womanhood upon her body and thought,  
And she served Naaman's wife, a lonely girl,



To answer bidding, and covet little tones  
Of kindness that she heard go to and fro,  
But not for her. She trembled as she stood  
At the proud woman's couch, because a fault  
In orders done meant scolding and even rods.  
And she had but two joys. One, to remember  
A Galilean town, and the blue waters  
That washed the pebbles that she knew so well,  
Yellow in sunlight, or frozen in the moon,  
A little curve of beach, where she would walk  
At any hour with an old silver man,  
Her father's father, her sole companion,  
Who told her tales of Moses and the prophets  
That lived in the old days. And of that time  
She had but now poor treasures of the mind,  
Little seclusions when, the day's work done,  
She made thought into prayer before she slept;  
These, and a faded gown that she had brought  
Into captivity, patterned with sprigs of thyme,  
And blades of wheat, and little curling shells,  
And signs of heaven figured out in stars,  
Made by a weaver that her grandsire knew,  
A gift on some thanksgiving. She might not wear it,  
Being suited as became a slave, but often  
At night she would spread it in her loneliness,  
And think how finely she too might be dressed,  
As finely as any proud woman of them all,  
If the God of Israel had not visited her  
Surely for sin, though she could not remember.  
Thus one joy was. And then the Lord Naaman,  
This wonder soiled, this pitiful great captain  
Forbidden all that he had so proudly been—  
To worship him, that was her other joy.  
When the dusk came, and the city fell to silence,  
And out of his poor banishment he would walk,  
She followed him, knowing the very hour,  
And all her heart was flooded through with pity,  
Because she knew the leprosy left still  
A Naaman untainted and lovely.

Then in her mind was the proud woman a loathing,  
Who dared to waste a marvel such as this,  
The right in the world's knowledge so to love.  
O pitiful evil blasting so great a flesh,  
Walling a spirit so governing itself  
In spite of desolation. A maid's thought thus  
Knew how the frames of mastery can suffer.

Sometimes at night when not even lepers walked,  
Solitary in the Syrian meadows she  
Would wander in the old perplexity  
That the moon makes of love. Never, she knew,  
Could any adoration that she brought  
Touch even the lord Naaman's banishment,  
The Naaman fallen from the time when even  
Great ladies dare not speak the thing they felt.  
She was nothing, or the world could never know  
If she was more than nothing; a maid to bind  
Tresses for beauty that was not her own.  
And yet she knew that she had beauty too,  
A little hermit beauty that might spend  
Royally if it dare and a man would speak,  
Royally, Naaman, but he could not hear.  
But still for all the silence of her lips,  
And heart with promise nothing known, she loved—  
Loved the sad leper walking in the dusk,  
Loved the great lord, loved even his leprosy,  
Since by it he came a little down to her,  
Loved him, and knew that her love was the sum  
Of all that loving, and must be. But even so,  
She knew her love an honester thing than any  
That the proud woman had. O moon, she thought,  
Could you not make me truly tell this love,  
This love pulsing along my blood and brain,  
As midnight surges going through the sky?  
And long she pondered how she best might serve.

Then one day when the fans moved, and she stood  
Ministering with her perfumes at the couch,

Her mistress, with eyes that meant the thought was nothing,  
Said "Is it not grievous that my lord goes thus?"  
And the maid felt the color at her throat  
Flow round her neck and flood up to her temples,  
But knowing, feared not, or put her fear aside,  
And said "Would God my lord were in Samaria,  
To seek Elisha there, a prophet, lady,  
Whom God hath taught to cure whom he will cure."  
She spoke, and the bright bowl trembled in her hands,  
And fear because of her words made the tongue dry  
As the woman looked with still cold eyes upon her.  
But the word passed from lip to lip, and the king  
Heard it, and sent for Naaman and said,  
"A girl among the slaves that you brought in  
From Israel has spoken a strange thing,  
Of one Elisha, a prophet whom they obey,  
Saying that he could bid the blemish off  
That is cheating Syria of her proudest man.  
Now therefore journey to him, and I will send  
Word to Israel's king, that he shall bless  
Favors from us in whom his fortune lies,  
Bidding him call this prophet to your cause.  
Go, and the love of Syria go with you."

Then Naaman with his servants went at dawn,  
And Naaman's wife saw how again might come  
Her mastery among the women of Syria.  
Yet was the little maid her hatred now,  
Lest of her word should come this resurrection.  
And Naaman went, and Israel's king was glad,  
Because of Syria's favor, and sent down  
The hill to where Elisha lived among  
Farmers of flax and goatherds and a few  
Unhappy men who brought their sorrow to God,  
Asking his mercy on the Syrian lord.  
And Naaman stood before the prophet of Israel,  
And told his grief. And Elisha looked upon him,  
Measured his faith, and bade him bathe his body  
Seven times in the river of Jordan, and be



Whole. And Naaman questioned, and was wrath,  
As was not any river of Damascus  
Purer than Jordan, and in more virtue flowing?  
But, little, his servants said, was this to do,  
And, as persuasion led him, he went down  
And seven times let Jordan cover him,  
And came with a clean body as of old,  
A strong man with the tides of blood before him,  
With equal limbs for all the spirit could dare,  
And into Syria he sang upon his riding.

And tidings came to the Syrian king of this,  
Heralding a Naaman mightier than ever,  
With clean flesh and a wisdom all matured,  
And all the city rang upon his coming,  
The king and his estate, people and priests,  
And soldiers glad of their old captain again,  
And matrons with their girls, and the rich merchants,  
All shouted Naaman, Naaman, through the streets.  
And Naaman's wife stood at the king's right hand,  
Her slave-borne canopy colored and spangled,  
While the great fans beat upon her pride again,  
And Naaman in plumes and plate and mail  
Again was master of the Syrian hosts.

Afar, beyond the barriers of the streets,  
Pressing among the crowd for a moment's seeing,  
The Israelitish maid, between her duties,  
Watched with a proud flush beating down her limbs.  
And shyly she had on a faded gown,  
Patterned with sprigs of thyme and blades of wheat,  
And paling stars and little curling shells.  
And as the shouting rose, she watched in silence,  
With trembling lips, and Naaman passed by her,  
And her hands moved towards him, and fell down,  
Then stole upon her bosom, as they would ease  
The aching beauty of her loneliness.  
And there unnoted as he passed she stood,  
With not a thought from all that world upon her.

Only, when service came again, she saw  
A glowing hatred in the proud woman's eyes.  
And in the night she thought of it, and wept,  
But not for any hatred were her tears.

*John Drinkwater*

## Is This the Lark!

**I**S this the lark  
Lord Shakespeare heard  
Out of the dark  
Of dawn! Is this the bird  
That stirred  
Lord Shakespeare's heart!

Is this the bird whose wing,  
Whose rapturous antheming,  
Rose up, soared radiant, became  
Sharp flame  
To Shelley listening  
And made him sing,  
Throbbing alone, aloof, feveredly apart,  
His profuse strains of unpremeditated art!

To think that I should hear him now  
Telling that single fiery rift of heaven a wild lark comes! . . .  
The fresh cool scent of earth yearns at the plough;  
In short keen rapid flurries the woodpecker drums. . . .  
To think that I should hear that mad thing sliding  
Along a smoking opal ladder!  
Hear that inevitable deluge of music riding  
Into the sun, richer now—fainter now—madder!  
To think that I should hear and know  
The song that Shelley heard, and Shakespeare, long ago!



## Abandoned

VACANT and ghostly and content with death,  
Once a man's hearthtree; now the haunt of bats;  
Once a cradle creaked upstairs and someone sang  
The terribly beautiful songs young mothers know.

It is hard, even though you hold your breath,  
To step without disturbing the loosened slats  
And livid plaster. . . . Go! for a whisper rang  
Through the bleak rafters: Take up your things and go!

## I Know It Will Be Quiet When You Come

I KNOW it will be quiet when you come:  
No wind; the water breathing steadily;  
A light like ghost of silver on the sea;  
And the surf dreamily fingering his drum.  
Twilight will drift in large and leave me numb  
With nearness to the last tranquillity;  
And then the slow and languorous tyranny  
Of orange moon, pale night, and cricket hum.

And suddenly there will be twist of tide,  
A rustling as of thin silk on the sand,  
The tremor of a presence at my side,  
The tremble of a hand upon my hand:  
And pulses sharp with pain, and fires fanned,  
And words that stumble into stars and hide.

*Joseph Auslander*

## The Mordant

THE first kiss knew naught of her,  
Naught.  
And if the first century of kisses  
    kenned or thought to ken a bit of her,  
'Twas just kenning as of children  
And not witting as of men.

But then  
God helped me in a dream,  
A dream as brief as deep.

A rug unwinding was she,  
Unwinding out of God.  
There was warp and woof of her,  
And a close weave,  
And a white, white weave,  
And angels pouring out of time and space  
Colors in lines.

But all the essence of space and time,  
And all the hues and curves,  
All would have gone for naught,  
Naught like the kisses,—  
Save for some proud quality of me,  
God gave,  
A something between,  
Between the rug unwinding  
And the angels pouring.

Rug of God is she, unwinding,  
Colors of Him the angels pour.  
Am I of God also,  
I mordant in dream?

*E. S. Wentworth*

## Anger

I SAW you coming and I was afraid!  
I knew you for the wave whose livid crests  
Dishevel over brows as hard as jade.  
Foam, like a flush, paled down the fallow sands—  
But still I set the pebbles of my breasts  
Against the sea, and clenched my shells of hands.

Oh, what had I of growth that could avail  
Before such height? My strength went out like smoke  
Beneath such weight. What could my heart but fail,  
To feel the great curve pressing back my bones  
As limp as kelp, to hear them as they broke  
In soft hysteria among the stones.

## Suicide

HEART-DOWNWARD on a burning stone  
Beside the pool I lay alone.  
On the blue edge I set my chin  
To watch the girl I had pushed in,  
To see her glimmer as she fell,  
Paler and paler, a star-shaped shell  
With outstretched limbs and floating hair—  
Deep down she slowly turned to stare;  
As if to say that she was drowned,  
Her white lips moved but made no sound,  
Driftingly then she seemed to pass  
Drawn like a smoke behind a glass—

And fishermen rowing home from sea,  
Muffled their oars lest they waken me.  
And climbed the dune with tiptoe tread  
Just as though I were not dead.

*Winifred Welles*



## Noon in a Wood

I HAVE been walking up and down here cursing  
All morning, and not a leaf has stirred;  
I have spilled black oaths enough to rot the heavens out  
And the grass under my feet hasn't heard;  
For all my grief the words pass wind-fallen  
As though I had not spoken a word.

I remember now, there was a vengeance to be taken,  
And the day is gone by;  
There is someone dead—the madness was fresh upon me—  
I heaped oaths against the sky;  
And I knew in an hour the pain of all trapped races  
Waiting here stubbornly to die.

Madman, let it alone, what shall be done,  
What has ever been done, through the slipping years, to settle the score?  
Here is one fallen, and here; earth takes them in wisdom to earth;  
Hell—if a death be unjust it is one injustice the more—  
There have been plenty; men have gone down—  
One forgets—it has been forgotten often before.

*Maxwell Anderson*

## Portrait

LIFE runs and ravel in her febrile hands,  
As multi-colored skeins of fraying wool,  
Here tangled, and here straight. She understands  
How frail the stamina of several strands,  
And dares not, for impatience, jerk—or pull.

Intent, she winds. Engrossed she knits a gay,  
Soft garment for her soul. She knows  
That, somewhere, Death, the little cat-at-play,  
Claws at loose ends with humorous delay  
And soft, on padded paws, comes, waits, and goes.

*Faith Baldwin*

## Spring in the Zoo

THEY are so melancholy when they sing,  
The monkeys that have mated yesteryear,  
When in their partly puckered brows appear  
The zoological effects of spring.  
They whimper while the bulls are bellowing,  
They leave the cadences to chantecleer.  
Stallions are shriller. Cats are more severe.  
But monkeys are so just about the thing.

The ignominy and the blatant urge  
Of ancient, unintelligible lust!  
I wonder if a cage is what compels  
That supervision at the very verge,  
That beady blink of undeceived disgust . . .  
While women's voices wave like little bells.

*Witter Bynner*

## Appleblossoms Near the Desert

THE flamed sun shrivels the appleblossoms  
And flame-breath wind blows them from the tree,  
And smoke lifts, from sands that smoulder,  
Across the valley, dizzily.

Like fairy rust on my hand is gathered  
All that is left of blossoms I keep,  
Having picked them up in crinkled pieces,  
A moment back from the winds' wide sweep. . . .

There may be fruit if the drouth is broken—  
But here in summer leaves do turn brown . . .  
All that I know is that appleblossoms  
Too soon have shrivelled and fallen down.

*Glenn Ward Dresbach*

# Sonnets to Sleep

## I. PROTEST

**A** GAIN, to-night the little death of sleep  
That lies so softly on our straining eyes?  
Barely we won through to the second deep  
Where star revealed to star across the skies  
Glow in the clear ice of the upper air.  
Now at the end of ways companionless  
Are we benumbed before our spirits dare  
Grow intimate with this new consciousness?

Stars, pallid stars, that lean upon the brink  
Of silences unbroken, to discern  
Where the upgathered harmony is sweeping  
Below the troubled surface, must we turn,  
While the first chords are faltering, and sink  
Oblivious, into this alien sleeping?

## II. MUTATION

Here in the night's unguarded fastnesses,  
Weary with petulance, the pale forms lie,  
Loose-limbed and lovely, breathing sigh to sigh  
Across the frail blooms of anemones.  
Dim through the shadowy fronds of maiden-hair  
Quivers the unsubstantial spray  
Of a white waterfall that faints away  
In intermittent whispers on the air.

Nothing of pride is left to them at all.  
Nothing of passion or of power or will,  
They have become as strangers and unknown,  
Their silence is a touch that must appal.  
Only the gods of heaven could be so still,  
Only the high gods or the quarried stone.

*Amy S. Jennings*



# The Measure A Journal of Poetry

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## *The Poetry of Edward Thomas*

*Collected Poems by Edward Thomas, with a foreword by Walter de la Mare. Thomas Seltzer, New York.*

IT is curious to think that to Robert Frost the American poet is due this book of poems that celebrate English country ways and English fields and birds and flowers. But so it is. Edward Thomas was a writer of books—a sorry trade enough for one who loves literature and loves what is splendid and revealing in life. He went on writing such books as publishers found him commissions for—*The Woodland Life, The Heart of England, The Pursuit of Spring, Beautiful Wales, The Inckniel Way, Celtic Studies, Norse Tales*—and fourteen other volumes. A few of them were of his own choice, after his own heart, says Walter de la Mare. And in every one of them he put certain pages of a writing that were for his own delight. Robert Frost, I have heard, showed him that these passages were hidden poetry. Then Edward Thomas began to isolate them. Then he made poems according to the patterns he had made while writing description or narrative. And so out of his prose writing his verse came. Not until the last years of his life, however. “Late in his life,” says Walter de la Mare, “when he seems almost to have given up hope of it, came to him this sudden creative impulse, the incentive of a new form into which he could pour his thoughts, feelings and experience with ease, freedom and delight.” These last years of his life left him barely in the middle age. It is remarkable that such a thick volume of verse was produced in such a few years.

In one of his poems, "Liberty," he has put the discontent of the writer who is unable to make the dream and the business one—

Both have liberty  
To dream what we could do if we were free  
To do some thing we had desired long,  
The moon and I. There's none less free than who  
Does nothing and has nothing else to do,  
Being free only for what is not to his mind,  
And nothing is to his mind.

The rhythm in this poem reminds one of the rhythms of Yeats' later poems, of that verse technique that aims at saying a thing rather than at singing it; it is a technique that would be natural to a man who had worked in subtle prose-rhythms. "Loose-woven, monotonous, unrelieved, the verse, as verse, may appear to a careless reader accustomed to the customary," Walter de la Mare remarks. And then he goes on to show us what is fine in it.

He knows the fields and the things of the fields intimately, but into their story he puts a portion of his own. He is apart; he is a man with a burthen of weariness and pain. He cannot make himself one with the birds whose movements tease him into a strange mood—

Under the after-sunset sky  
Two pewits sport and cry,  
More white than is the moon on high  
Riding the dark surge silently;  
More black than earth. Their cry  
Is the one sound under the sky.  
They alone move, now low, now high,  
And merrily they cry  
To the mischievous Spring sky,  
Plunging earthward, tossing high,  
Over the ghost who wonders why  
So merrily they cry and fly,  
Nor choose 'twixt earth and sky,  
While the moon's quarter silently  
Rides, and earth rests as silently.

Much of this poetry is concerned with external nature, but it is all deeply personal. It is a poetry that belongs to later days and to the moods of later life; it is often the expression of a lonely life. Many are appealing because of the personal feeling in them. In some of the poems there is an extraordinary clairvoyance—a sure knowledge that certain scenes are being looked on for the last time, and that the poet has come to "the borders of sleep." Edward Thomas was a Welshman, but he is with Thomas Hardy and E. A. Housman in the way he can bestow a charm on the English country places. The English place names are delightfully woven into many of his poems. Always in such poems there is a whimsical

revelation. But in one of that series the whimsicality ceases and the poem becomes poignant—

And you, Helen, what should I give you?  
So many things I would give you  
Had I an infinite great store  
Offered me and I stood before  
To choose. I would give you youth,  
All kinds of loveliness and truth,  
A clear eye as good as mine,  
Lands, waters, flowers, wine,  
As many children as your heart  
Might wish for, a far better art  
Than mine can be, all you have lost  
Upon the travelling waters tossed,  
Or given to me. If I could choose  
Freely in that great treasure-house  
Anything from any shelf,  
I would give you back yourself,  
And power to discriminate  
What you want and want it not too late,  
Many fair days free from care  
And heart to enjoy both foul and fair,  
And myself, too, if I could find  
Where it lay hidden and it proved kind.

At the end he did find where the self lay hidden. "Yet in those last years, however desperate at times the distaste and disquiet, however sharp the sacrifice," says Walter de la Mare, "he found an unusual serenity and satisfaction. His comradeship, his humor blossomed over. He plunged back from books into life, and wrote only for sheer joy in writing." "Thomas has true lovers to-day," says his friend, the poet of *The Listeners*, "but when the noise of the present is silenced—and the drums and trappings of the war in which he died—his voice will be heard more clearly; the words of a heart and mind devoted throughout his life to all that can make the world a decent and natural home for the meek and the lovely, the true, the rare, the patient, the independent and the oppressed."

*Padraic Colum*

### *Irish History in Little*

*Anthology of Irish Verse, Edited by Padraic Colum. Boni and Liveright, New York.*

ONE must read this *Anthology of Irish Verse* as two things: as a collection of poems and as the lyric history of a people, for it is both. The intense national feeling which national repression has driven into all Irish literature makes it inevitable that every collection of verse written in the island should touch Irish history closely, and Padraic Colum has made this necessity the backbone of his work. From these pages the reader can gather whatever is most essential in the attitude of those who



have lived so long under the shadow of Dublin Castle toward each other and toward the particular patch of ground which happens to have been left to them by the sea.

It must be confessed that there is a fair share of disappointment in store for any man who has looked on the Irish as an inherently poetic race when he finishes the volume. They have a fair share of poetry, the Irish, but they are much too keen, conscious and theoretical to breed great singers. They are so seldom lost in themselves, or are so seldom aware of being lost, that their visions seem too often artificial or catalogued. In description touched with fantasy or in drama edged with laughter they are at their best. Their grief is the grief of realization, of inescapable things that are at hand; their joy is joy in things held in the palm or in the eyes to be weighed and regarded. They count the outward appearances of their world over one after another, seeking the just appellation, eagerest for the right word to say exactly what happened, exactly how this looked, exactly how that came about.

They create beauty, then, like a delicate tapestry or like a clear-voiced instrument lacking in overtones of brooding. The dream is in the poem, not elsewhere. Hence this anthology is much more successful as history in epitome than as a group of lyrics. Even so Irish poetry would have much greater authenticity for English readers, beyond doubt, if it had all been written in English, for the trail of the translator is over much of it and translation of verse is thoroughly impossible. Probably the subtle art of Yeats and of Mr. Colum himself is to be found in many of the originals here attempted in another tongue, but without the originals we are baffled to find much of the oldest work so watery, so characterless.

The way of time with an anthology is to weed it out and wear it down, and the way of a critic should be the same. As a representation of Ireland Mr. Colum's book is excellent so far as I know, but only a few of the titles included would live long on their own merit. It is a hopeful sign for the renascence of literature in Ireland since 1900 that most of the older pieces will probably go, most of the later will stay. *Dark Rosaleen* will not soon be forgotten, but many another patriotic invocation has little to offer outside its own time and place. Meanwhile *A Drover*, *The Song of the Old Mother*, and *A Farewell* stand out so far above the majority of poems herein listed with them that one could wish there were a companion anthology of the best of the moderns, for they have been nearly crowded out to make room for more traditional but less moving things.

Maxwell Anderson

## Contributors

JOHN DRINKWATER needs no introduction to American readers.

E. S. WENTWORTH is a nom de plume.

FAITH BALDWIN is Mrs. HUGH HAMLIN CUTHRELL of Shelter Island Heights, New York. She has been publishing poetry for the last ten years. For the past two years she has been writing short stories. Her novel *Mavis of Green Hill* was brought out by Small Maynard last fall.

WITTER BYNNER's poem, *Spring in the Zoo*, was, judging from the manuscript, one conceived by the imaginative Emanuel Morgan, Mr. Bynner's other personality of *Spectrum* fame.

AMY S. JENNINGS was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, and graduated from Barnard College in 1920. At present she lives in New York. She has published one poem in the *Survey*.

# The Measure

## *A Journal of Poetry*

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